

Name of Committee: Override Study Committee Schools Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: December 6, 2013; 8:30 a.m.

Meeting Location: Town Hall – Room 103

Members Present: Cliff Brown, Beth Stram, Tim Sullivan, Chad Ellis Carol Kamin, Janet Gelbart, Lee Selwyn

Others Present: Dick Benka, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, Diane Medvee, Mark Gray, Helen Charlupski, Alan Morse, Perry Stoll, Jessica Wender-Shubow

### **Goals of Meeting**

Beth began with outlining two goals for the meeting: 1. To understand what each task force of the Schools Sub-Committee is addressing and 2. To get a better sense of what we are doing now, what can be ready by January 15<sup>th</sup>, and what needs to be done for the future.

Janet wanted to make sure we understood from the program task force discussions about specific program efficiencies; Lee wanted to address the reaction to the technology presentation; Tim wanted to ensure discussion about the coordination of the issues.

Discussion continued with Beth saying that the programs task force has not gotten to specific efficiencies and that Bill has been asked about addressing a “Plan B.” We would like to look at the highest cost “buckets” and understand implications of change. Tim asked about the utilization of programs such as the Schools Within Schools (SWS) program and Jim added other programs to look at are the tutoring and world language programs.

### **Reaction to Technology Presentation**

Questions arose from members about whether there would be any net savings that would result from implementing the plan and to what degree can the costs be spread out over time. Tim asked why this presentation came to the OSC half way through the process and Susan responded that this is when it was ready for presentation and that the deferral of the plan happened because resources were pushed to the classroom. Jim said that choices were made not to invest in

technology and questioned how the technology plan was tied to curriculum choices. Dick thought that more than \$400,000 of technology dollars have not been utilized and Helen responded that it had been utilized to replace staff. Lee thought that the plan was fundamentally obsolete and won't survive its five-year life. He thinks that technology plan should be built around tablets, smart phones etc., and questioned, for example, built in projectors in each room and asked what are the educational benefits of the plan and the efficiencies. Jim gave the example of focusing on 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade and explicitly tying the technology to achievement.

### **Special Education**

Tim raised the issue of the inclusion model. Cliff clarified that the task force is not evaluating the inclusion model. Cliff raised the issue of looking into out-of-district placement for BEEP SPED kids and whether there could be efficiencies and whether it made any sense. Lee pointed out that to the extent that we have in-district programming we then pay for out-of-district kids such as METCO and Materials Fee kids. The question of how many METCO and Materials Fee children are in high need SPED has not been answered. Cliff said that on December 17<sup>th</sup> the Populations and Special Education Task Force will be meeting with Dr. Lupini and early education staff to answer some of these questions as well as to review Lee's modeling that addressed the various permutations possible related to class size and demographics.

### **Cost Analysis**

Beth then suggested a Cost Analysis that would include **system-wide analyses** such as changes in the number of students, class size; **one-off analyses** that would include, for example costs for in-district vs. out-of district; **benchmarking** that could include, for example, the relationship between special education and class size as well as questions around BEEP; and **other inquiry** such as how success is measured in special ed. **Beth will summarize this discussion with a chart that will be sent out to members of the Schools Sub-Committee.**

### **Other Discussion**

Jim asked if we were benchmarking against ourselves and disaggregating for different populations. Lee asked how our ratio of SPED spending compares to other towns. Cliff said that we should know what our costs have been by bringing kids from out of district into Brookline for SPED. Susan suggested a reframing of the question to – here is the cost of providing special education one way; what would it cost another way? There was a discussion about standards for special

education and how they have changed over the years. Helen said that the number of children on the autism spectrum is growing and there is an impact.

Carol discussed comparing the BEEP program tuition to private providers and determining if a tuition increase made sense and that we've been told that this work is being done by staff. Dick raised the issue of benchmarking for administrative costs. It appears that guidance costs are under benchmarks and administrative costs are over. Susan said that the school committee is in discussions with the Superintendent and a consultant will be hired to look at central administrative costs.

Cliff agreed to look at other towns' schools budgets to compare special education costs. Newton has done work in this regard and Cliff will be in touch with them.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30.